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April 3, 2013

TO: Each Health Deputy

FROM: Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H. *JEF*
Director and Health Officer

SUBJECT: **WORKING TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE HEALTH**

This week (April 1-7, 2013) is National Public Health Week. In honor of this annual event, I want to share with you of the things that the Department of Public Health (DPH) does to protect health, prevent disease, and promote health and well-being in Los Angeles County. The attached document exemplifies how DPH addresses and improves individual and community health throughout the county. We hope this document helps Los Angeles County residents better understand the breadth of DPH's programs and activities that enrich their lives every day.

Thank you for your ongoing support and assistance. Happy Public Health Week!

If you have any questions or would like more information, please let me know.

JEF:mh/st

Enclosure

c: Loreto Maldonado
Sharon Reichman
Cindy Harding



WORKING TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE HEALTH

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) protects health, prevents disease and promotes health and well-being for all persons in Los Angeles County through a variety of innovative programs and services.

DPH PROVIDES 24/7 PROTECTION AGAINST ILLNESS, EPIDEMICS AND HEALTH-RELATED EMERGENCIES

- DPH tracks and monitors infectious diseases within the County, in California, in the United States and around the world since such diseases have no boundaries.
- DPH manages an electronic disease and laboratory reporting system, which provides early warnings of possible disease clusters or outbreaks—and even single cases of priority diseases or infections.
- DPH investigates reported diseases and conditions and, when appropriate, offers testing and treatment or vaccines to prevent more cases.
- DPH issues health alerts to doctors, veterinarians, hospitals and laboratories with critical information and instructions related to unusual health circumstances and potential health-related emergencies.
- DPH runs a state-of-the-art laboratory, which provides testing 24/7 to quickly address disease outbreaks.
- DPH gives vaccine to thousands of school children to protect against vaccine-preventable diseases.
- DPH has a comprehensive emergency plan that allows rapid deployment of staff to provide medication, vaccines and other resources to reduce disease and death caused by health-related emergencies.
- DPH collaborates with local community- and faith-based organizations to engage neighborhoods in preparedness planning.

DPH ENSURES CONSUMER SAFETY

- DPH protects residents from contaminated and unsafe foods.
- DPH proactively contacts vendors across the County about recalled food items and sends inspectors out to ensure recalled products have been removed from store shelves.
- DPH empowers consumers with visible letter grades, based on the food handling and safety practices within the kitchen, for every restaurant.
- DPH investigates consumer complaints related to food items, restaurants, housing, noise and animal infestations.

DPH IMPROVES COMMUNITY HEALTH

- DPH plans and implements projects designed to improve community health, often working with our community partners to address and overcome barriers to better health.
- DPH provides user-friendly information about a wide range of health topics in several languages by way of press conferences, telephone hotlines, social media and a robust website.
- DPH helps low-income children and their families receive and retain health insurance coverage.
- DPH works with community partners to reduce infant mortality rates; special programs have resulted in fewer infant deaths within the most vulnerable groups.
- DPH helps young, low-income, first-time mothers by offering home visitation services to improve pregnancy outcomes and parental behaviors.
- DPH provides education on child passenger safety and distributes free and reduced-cost car seats to families in need.
- DPH collaborates with school districts, community-based organizations, parents and city officials to address the obesity epidemic.
- DPH supports the delivery of STD screening and treatment services to thousands of residents through a vast network of public health clinics, community-based organizations and school-based clinics.



WORKING TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE HEALTH

DPH ADVOCATES FOR BETTER OPTIONS, SAFER ENVIRONMENTS AND COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

- DPH collects and examines local health data and informs local leaders, decision makers and community advocates of findings with recommended actions for health improvement.
- DPH works with cities and other agencies to adopt smoke-free public space policies, such as parks, worksites, apartments, farmers' markets and beaches.
- DPH helps communities improve access to playgrounds and open space at school locations after school hours for physical activity through "joint-use agreements."
- DPH works with local school districts to improve the nutritional quality of school meals.
- DPH supports physical education trainings for teachers to increase physical activity during school hours.
- DPH provides funding and participates in the Parks After Dark Program, which provides recreational opportunities for high-risk youth and their families—part of the County's Gang Violence Reduction Initiative.
- DPH supports the delivery of lifesaving medical care and support services to over 10,000 low-income residents living with HIV/AIDS each year.

HEALTH SUCCESSES IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

- DPH has given over 20,000 Tdap shots at DPH clinics and community events to protect the community from a resurgence of pertussis, or whooping cough.
- DPH supported the delivery of more than 118,000 HIV tests in 2012, allowing residents to learn their status, access care (if needed) and interrupt the spread of HIV.
- DPH submitted nearly 30,000 health insurance applications for children and families in 2012 alone.
- DPH, with partners, has significantly reduced infant mortality rates to below the national goal level.
- DPH led the local response to the H1N1 flu pandemic by ensuring doctors and residents were regularly informed and by managing the largest mass vaccination effort ever in Los Angeles County with more than 200,000 vaccines given over 7 weeks.
- DPH responded to the nuclear radiation threat triggered by the Japanese tsunami by monitoring the air and keeping the public up-to-date on the changing situation.
- DPH efforts have contributed to a significant decrease in smoking in Los Angeles County, which now has one of the lowest levels of smoking in California as well as the United States; 100% of the Los Angeles County coastline is now smoke-free.
- DPH influenced the mandate of menu labeling in large chain restaurants (SB 1420) as well as the elimination of artificial trans-fats in restaurants (AB 97).

DPH IS RECOGNIZED AS A NATIONAL LEADER IN LOCAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

- DPH is the only public health department in the nation with an established, daily partnership with the FBI. This unique partnership requires high levels of security clearance and quality public health expertise to effectively support rapid assessment of potential health-related terrorist or criminal acts.
- DPH's restaurant grading system has been adopted in cities across the U.S.
- DPH's charge to mandate calorie labels on menus led to state laws.
- DPH received the second-largest competitive funding award from the federal government to expand and advance innovative projects aimed at reducing chronic diseases in Los Angeles County.

DPH IS A VALUABLE ASSET TO ALL RESIDENTS OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

The County's public health staff are committed subject matter experts who are adept at disease prevention, disease control, health promotion, health advocacy and health improvement strategy. These public health professionals are prepared to address complex health challenges—and to seize opportunities that make a difference in health—for people, families and neighborhoods across LA County.

